

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TUNIS 0339

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, TS

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI:

PROPOSED VISIT OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE KHEFACHA TO U.S.

REF: TUNIS 0046

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH FOREIGN MINISTER CHATTI JANUARY 16 HE EXPRESSED GOT'S STRONG INTEREST IN ARRANGING VISIT BY DEFENSE MINISTER KHEFACHA TO US IN ADVANCE OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S PLANNED VISIT. I TOLD FOREIGN MINISTER THAT WE WERE ALREADY IN TOUCH WITH WASHINGTON CONCERNING THE MATTER (REFTEL) AND I AWAITED WORD AS TO WHETHER SUCH A VISIT WOULD BE POSSIBLE. I NOTED THAT IT WOULD TAKE WASHINGTON SOME TIME TO REVIEW LIST OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT WHICH GOT HAS REQUESTED AND IT WOULD PROBABLY BE PREFERABLE FOR ANY POSSIBLE KHEFACHA VISIT TO BE DELAYED A LITTLE LONGER.

2. COMMENT: AS RECOMMENDED IN REFTEL, I SUGGEST THAT WE ACQUIESCE IN KHEFACHA VISIT TO WASHINGTON BEFORE PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S VISIT TO U.S. AND ALSO THAT WE FIX DATE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. (WE WOULD EXPECT TUNISIANS TO PAY COSTS OF TRANSPORTATION.) KHEFACHA, WHO OVER THE YEARS HAS OCCUPIED INFLUENTIAL POSITIONS IN TUNISIAN GOVERNMENT, IS A RELATIVE OF PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AND A CLOSE CONFIDANT. HE HAS NEVER VISITED U.S. BEFORE. I BELIEVE A VISIT BY HIM TO U.S. WOULD BE EDUCATIVE AND USEFUL AND, AMONG
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OTHER THINGS, WOULD AFFORD US AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE IT

ABUNDANTLY CLEAR TO HIM PRECISE LIMITS OF OUR MILITARY
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM. DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE AWARE THAT SOME
WEEKS AGO KHEFACHA WAS NOMINATED BY CHUSLOT FOR PARTICIPATION
IN SECRETARY OF THE ARMY VIP ORIENTATION PROGRAM.
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